

Message Text

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43

ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-01

INR-07 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 XMB-04 OPIC-06 SP-02 CIEP-02

LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 L-02 H-02 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15

SY-04 INT-05 /084 W

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R 101200Z FEB 75

FM AMCONSUL ANTWERP

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1024

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

UNCLAS ANTWERP 0076

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: ECEM, US, BE

SUBJ: EXPLOSION QT UNION CARBIDE PLANT IN ANTWERP

AT APPROXIMATELY 0610 THIS MORNING A TREMENDOUS EXPLOSION OCCURED
IN UNION CARBIDE BELGIUM'S LOW-DESITY POLYETHYLENE PLANT IN
INDUSTRIALIZED AREA ON RIGHT BANK OF SCHELDT RIVER ON OUTSKIRTS
OF ANTWERP, HEAVILY DAMAGING ALL FACILITIES.

FORCE OF EXPLOSION SHATTERED WINDOWS IN ANTWERP METROPOLITAN AREA
SEVERAL KILOMETERS AWAY. AS OF NOON TODAY FIVE WORKERS HAVE BEEN
IDENTIFIED AS KILLED IN THE EXPLOSION, ONE IS MISSING, AND SOME
20 WERE INJURED.

UNION CARBIDE BELGIUM, WHICH IS SUBSIDIARY OF UNION CARBIDE
CORPORATION OF NEW YORK, HAS A SECOND PLANT ON LEFT BANK OF SCHELDT
WHICH WAS NOT DAMAGED.

I VISITED THE DISASTER SITE THIS MORNING AND SPOKE WITH MANAGING
DIRECTOR FOR BOTH PLANTS AND OTHER PLANT OFFICIALS. MANAGING
DIRECTOR STATES CAUSE OF EXPLOSION IS STILL UNKNOWN BUT BELIEVES
IT PROBABLY OCCURRED IN REACTOR AREA. HE ESTIMATED DAMAGE IN
TENS OF MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, AND SAID IT WOULD BE SEVERAL WEEKS
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BEFORE IT WILL BE KNOWN WHETHER IT IS POSSIBLE TO REBUILD PLANT.

EVEN IN EVENT REBUILDING IS POSSIBLE HE ESTIMATED PRODUCTION
COULD NOT BE RESUMED BEFORE AT LEAST 10 OR 12 MONTHS. DAMAGED
PLANT WAS BUILT IN STAGES, BEGINNING IN 1961.

ONLY 30 NIGHT SHIFT WORKERS WERE IN PLANT AT TIME OF EXPLOSION.
DURING THE DAY A STAFF OF 350 IS ON DUTY. THERE HAS BEEN NO HINT
OF SABOTAGE SUGGESTED IN CONNECTION WITH EXPLOSION.
FISHER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition History: n/a
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